



SEASONAL BLOOM SCHEDULE

SPRING:

Azalea
Carolina Cherry Laurel
Camellia japonica
Carolina Jessamine
Clematis
Deutzia
Eastern Redbud
Florida Dogwood
Forsythia
Flowering Crabapple
Flowering Quince
Fringe Tree
Iris
Kousa Dogwood
Loropetalum
Native Azalea
Ohio Buckeye
Pinckneya pubens
Spiraea
Star Magnolia
Saucer Magnolia
Sweet Bay
Trumpet Honeysuckle
Snowball Viburnum
Wisteria
Yoshino Cherry

SUMMER:

Banana Shrub
Butterfly Bush
Carolina Silverbell
Clematis
Crape Myrtle
Daylily
Golden Rain Tree
Gordonia
Hydrangea
Hosta
Sweet Mock Orange
Sourwood
Southern Magnolia
Vitex

FALL:

Camellia Sasanqua
Cassia
Lespedeza
Spider Lily

WINTER:

Camellia japonica
Helleborus
Holly
Sweet Breath of Spring
Winter Jasmine

Welcome to Sumter's Swan Lake Iris Gardens, home to all eight known species of swan and some of the most intensive plantings of Japanese Iris (*Iris ensata*) in the United States. Teeming with life all four seasons of the year, Swan Lake offers tranquility and enchantment to visitors of all ages. A gift to the Sumter community from the Bland and Heath families, the gardens encompass 150 acres, with more than 120 varieties of iris that explode into a late-spring burst of color. The gardens also feature a rainbow of other seasonal blossoms and are a birdwatcher's paradise of swans, Canada geese, mallards, wood ducks, muscovies, anhingas, herons, egrets and more.

In 1927, Sumter businessman Hamilton Carr Bland purchased a piece of swampland adjacent to Liberty Street, with the intention of developing it as a fish pond and private sanctuary. Assorted debris was used to construct islands in the pond, and the shore was built up with trash and clippings. Also along the shore, Mr. Bland tossed bulbs of Japanese iris that had failed to thrive in the garden at his home. The discarded bulbs took root in the damp, acid soil, and more than 75 years later, the iris blooms transform the gardens in spring into a paradise of singular beauty. Referred to by *Southern Living* magazine as a "lovely mistake" and named one of America's "best freebies" by *Better Homes & Gardens*, Swan Lake Iris Gardens is the crown jewel of the city of Sumter, a showplace of breathtaking natural splendor that brings visitors from up and down the Eastern seaboard and across the world.

The Bland Garden, the original site of Swan Lake Iris Gardens, is located on the north side of Liberty Street. It offers a peaceful "back to nature" experience to visitors with iris beds, abundant native plants and a boardwalk stretching deep into the cypress swamp. The Bland Garden gazebo is the site of Sumter's loveliest outdoor weddings. Across Liberty Street the Heath Garden, a gift to the community from the A.T. Heath family in 1938, offers picnic areas, a children's playground, the Swan Lake-Iris Gardens Visitors Center, the Iris Market concessions shop and more. A leisurely 3/4 mile stroll around the lake reveals a Braille garden to delight the senses, a camellia garden and the "swandominiums" where cygnets are hatched and raised. The gardens are joined by the McDuffie Pedestrian Crossover that soars over Liberty Street. Throughout the park's 150 acres, towering oak and pine trees shade walkways and rustic bridges, and the magnificent cypress trees tint the mirrorlike waters an inky black.

The garden's swans, the royalty of waterfowl, are gathered from all over the world. They grace the pond and gardens with their beauty all year round. Although the birds are generally friendly, they may exhibit territorial behavior during the mating season and should be approached with reasonable caution.

Swan Lake is also the scene of many exciting events throughout the year. Memorial Day weekend brings the annual Iris Festival, a Sumter tradition since 1940 and a multiple winner of the Southeast Tourism Society's "Top 20 in the Southeast" award. Every December, the holiday season blazes into life with the Swan Lake Fantasy of Lights. The Bland Garden gazebo, Garden Street Shelter, Visitors Center, and Heath Pavilion host numerous weddings, parties and meetings throughout the year.

Swan Lake-Iris Gardens is owned and maintained by the City of Sumter for the enjoyment of its citizens and visitors to the area. The Friends of Swan Lake, a local support organization, is devoted to the continued beautification and improvement of the gardens.

The gardens are open from 7:30 a.m. to dusk daily, except during extreme weather. Pets, bicycles, musical instruments and radios, flower picking and alcoholic beverages are not permitted. There is no admission charge to bask in the peace, beauty and serenity of Swan Lake-Iris Gardens.

Step into a scene from a fairy tale...here in Sumter, South Carolina, in the middle of everything!

How to Find Us...

Auto: Sumter is located between I-95, I-20, I-26 and I-77, and easily accessible from I-85. US Highways 76, 378, 521 and 15 also run through the city.

Air: Air travel is convenient also, with private planes flying into Sumter's airport and most commercial flights coming into Columbia, SC. Rental cars are available at the Columbia airport.

Sumter Convention & Visitors Bureau
822 West Liberty Street
PO Box 1449
Sumter, South Carolina 29151
1-800-688-4748
www.sumtourtourism.com



Meet the Swans...



Bewick's Swans, from Japan, have a long black and yellow beak. They are similar to the Whooper Swan, but smaller, shorter-necked, with a more rounded head shape. As with all swan species, Bewick's swans mate exclusively for life.



Black (Australian) Swans are black in color except for their red beaks, black legs and a fringe of white underneath the wings. They mate twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall, corresponding to the mating season in their native Australia.



Black-necked Swans are native to South America, especially Argentina and the Falkland Islands. They are white birds with a black neck and head, and a fleshy red lobe on their beaks.



The **Coscoroba** is the smallest breed of swan, weighing an average of 8-11 pounds. They are native to South America. The birds have pure white feathers with pink beaks and pink legs.



Mute Swans, the swans of fairy tales, originated in the British Isles. They have orange beaks with a distinctive black knob. There have been records of Mute Swans living for 20 years. They have been in residence at Swan Lake since the early 1930's.



Known for its distinctive call, the **Trumpeter Swan** is a native North American bird. It has a long, black beak and is the largest of the swans, with full height reaching as much as six feet. The Trumpeter was until recently an endangered species and is still considered a rare breed.



Whistling Swans can be distinguished from Trumpeters by a small yellow marking below the eye. Also known as Tundra Swans, they are the most widespread of the North American swan species.



Whooper Swans are similar in appearance to Bewick's, but larger, with yellow beak markings extending below the nostril. Native to Europe and Asia, they are as noisy as their name implies!



SWAN LAKE IRIS GARDENS

FEATURES & FACILITIES

Bland Garden

*Gazebo**

Iris beds & native flowers

Cypress boardwalk

Greenhouse

Heath Garden

Swan Lake-Iris Gardens

*Visitors Center**

Iris Market (Concessions)

Children's Playground

Camellia Garden

Braille Garden

*Garden Street Shelter**

*Heath Pavilion**

**Reserved facilities. Please call for availability and pricing.*

GUIDED TOURS OF THE GARDENS ARE AVAILABLE WITH ADVANCE NOTICE.

EVENTS

Sumter Iris Festival

The Iris Festival celebrates the annual blossoming of the garden's thousands of Japanese Iris. One of South Carolina's oldest events, the Iris Festival attracts people from around the globe for a fun-filled Memorial Day weekend each year. The festival features arts and crafts, merchandise, a children's play area, cultural events, flower shows, lots of musical entertainment, delicious food and more!

Swan Lake Fantasy of Lights

The brilliant display of more than one million lights delights the eyes and spirits of all ages. Children and "children at heart" alike will marvel at the

spectacular display of lighted imagery during the holiday season, when the lake and gardens twinkle with light. Swans take flight pulling Santa's sleigh, angels blink in an array of dazzling splendor, and the most popular characters of song and story greet visitors. The magnificent glitter of colored lights mesmerizes those who motor through this magical display. Swan Lake's Fantasy of Lights is a must for entire family!

For park information and current events listings, please call the Swan Lake Visitors Center at (803) 436-2640 or toll-free at 1-800-688-4748, or visit us online at www.sumtourtourism.com